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In an exclusive Q&A, the presidential nominees address issues critical to veterans. Getty

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As COVID-19 drives a wedge between Americans, we need to remember how much unites us. By Alan W. Dowd

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SUPREME SACRIFICE

Marine Corps veteran Charles Scott rings a bell as names are read from a list of Missouri's 9,873 World War II dead during a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Victory Over Japan (V-J) Day at Sylvan Springs Park in St. Louis on Aug. 15. The event was organized by Emerson Marshall Sherwood American Legion Post 213. Photo by Whitney Curtis

The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its nearly 2 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 12,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.



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'You've Got to Get This Flag Up' Upon opening the August magazine, I was pleased to see the article on the Boyds raising the flag at Post 282 after the previous one was set on fire (Table of Contents). Kudos to both from this Army vet. It's great to know that some people still care about the flag and America in these crazy times. - Cameron Lonsdale, State College, Pa. Photo courtesy Derek Boyd

I am an Air Force veteran. and when I read the article about our flag I was very moved by the Boyds' action. We can use more people like Derek and Cory. Many thanks to them for a outstanding job.

- Carmen Emmolo, Cedar Grove, N.J.

What part of the flag-burning, graffiti-painting and glassbreaking of an American Legion post is considered "peaceful"?

- Vic P. Gilliland, Louisville, Kv.

'And Then There Were Six'

I enjoyed this fantastic article by Alan W. Dowd (August). From 1986 to 1988, I was stationed at Consolidated Space Operations Center (CSOC) at Falcon Air Force Station – now Schriever Air Force Base outside Colorado Springs. I was assigned to the 1002nd Space System Support Squadron, supporting the first satellite control in Mission Control Complex 1 (MCC-1).

We did four months of training on the IBM computer system we were to operate, including a one-month tour to Onizuka Air Force Station in California to work on live missions from the "Blue Cube." I was also fortunate to work on the acceptance testing of the mainframe at Falcon before MCC-1 went operational. As part of this work, our small team of enlisted personnel was awarded the Air Force Base Space Operations Badge.

I don't think anything will ever surpass the feeling of working live satellite missions in what was the forerunner of the U.S. Space Command. I am proud to see my fellow airmen carrying on this tradition.

- Phil De Monte, Thatcham, England

'Trooper and Mount'

I enjoyed Albert Manchester's article (August). Here in Monterey, a group called Friends of the Fort Ord Warhorse has

worked to preserve the memory of that post's horse cavalry and artillery history, including repair and restoration of the Army's last remaining equine veterinary clinic. An equestrian trail on the post is named for the late retired Sgt. 1st Class Alan MacDonald, who began his career as a horse soldier in the 1930s, served in World War II and retired in the 1950s while serving at the Army Remount Center in New Mexico.

- Kevin Howe, Pacific Grove, Calif.

In the late 1940s, my family's desert-grazing cow/calf operation bought a former cavalry horse for me. I was 12 or 13. Smokey was charcoal-colored and about 16 hands high, and one great horse. He was a natural when it came to working cattle – only bucked me off once. We couldn't keep him in the corral when he felt like roaming. Fortunately our Mojave Desert ranch was quite remote, and Smokey would always be nearby browsing on wildflowers and filaree. We had him well into my teen years when he became too old to do the work.

- Ron Duntley Sr., Fallon, Nev.

Thank you for the article on the Army's use of cavalry in the 20th century. My uncle, Sgt. William H. Dickenson, joined the cavalry in 1940 because he loved horses. His horse was named Sandstorm and his sergeant's horse was named Bartender. Six months later, the Army took away Uncle Bill's horse and gave him a recon vehicle.

During the invasion of Europe, Uncle Bill received what we in Vietnam called a "million-dollar wound." Instead of using it to return home, he lobbied to return to his front-line unit. A German sniper shot and killed him on Dec. 4, 1944, near the French-German border. He is buried at Lorraine American Cemetery in France. In 1969, while I was a tank platoon leader stationed in Baumholder, West Germany, I put on my officer dress blues, drove to St. Avold and saluted Uncle Bill's grave in the snow. Never forget.

- John D. Rawls, Laramie, Wyo.

American Legion values

I was especially proud as I read National Commander Bill Oxford's message ("Unequal Treatment Violates Nation's Highest Values," August). Its bold endorsement of principles embedded in our national resolution of nearly 100 years ago is not only a fantastic reminder of what we all fought for, but how we continue to be on the forefront of the commitment to justice.

- David M. Carlson, Fountain Valley, Calif.

Mail-in voting

Catherine Engelbrecht's response is nothing more than emotional rhetoric (Big Issues, August). Oregon has had voteby-mail for over 20 years and hasn't had any of the problems to which she alludes. With the closing of some polling places in areas with minority residents, and concern for safety and health during this pandemic, it is crucial that vote-by-mail be expanded in all states.

– Jim Kosel, Mount Angel, Ore.

Here in New Jersey, we recently experienced mail-in voting in local elections. It was a disaster. Voter fraud led to 20 percent of ballots submitted being rejected, as well as the arrests of two candidates and two campaign workers. On the lighter side, only three dead people tried to vote, but their ballots were rejected because they failed to list a cemetery in the city as an address.

In supporting mail-in voting for a national election, Eli Lehrer claims the Justice Department will prosecute election fraud, so he assumes that is a sufficient deterrent. But the president who is elected appoints the head of the Justice Department and the supporting agencies that would investigate the fraud. Would anyone accept their findings as credible?

– K. Fleishaker, Ramsey, N.J.

Catherine Engelbrecht says voter rolls are "littered with duplicate, dead and ineligible names." As a poll worker and election judge with several years of experience, I can state that this is not the case in the precinct I worked. Voter rolls are purged on a regular basis, and if someone died after the last purge, a spouse, child, relative or neighbor will tell the poll worker of the person's passing and it will be noted. If someone tries to vote as that person, two or more types of ID ae required and then the person would be required to vote by provisional ballot. A county judge would later rule on whether to accept that ballot.

– J.E. Johnson, Harrisburg, Pa.

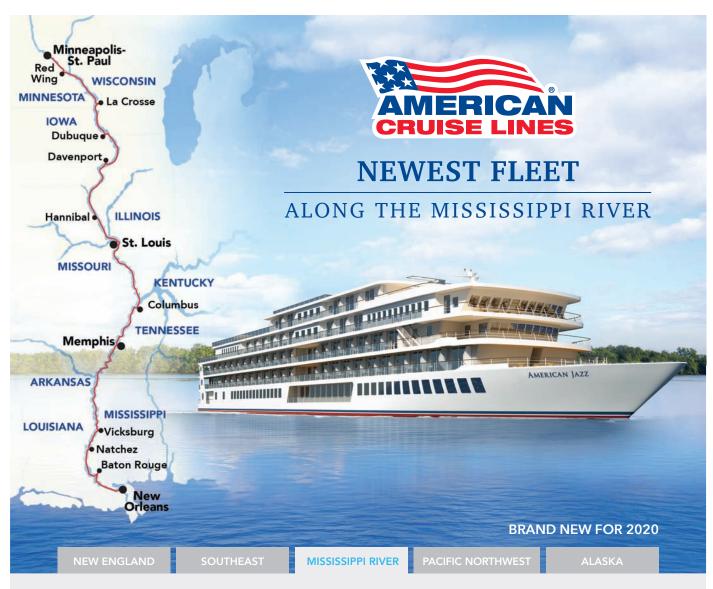
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Include your hometown and a daytime phone number for verification. All letters published are subject to editing.

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A right like no other

According to a quote widely attributed to Mark Twain, "The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read." I think the same can be said for voting.

The right to vote is what most sets apart a truly free people from those who are oppressed. It is a right for which countless Americans have bled and sometimes died. It is one that should never be taken for granted.

Even in the middle of a contentious political campaign, the "what" is far more important to The American Legion than the "who." Article II, Section 2 of our constitution states, "The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment."

Nonpolitical does not mean nonengaged. Quite the opposite. The American Legion has a robust legislative and policy agenda. To find out where it stands on various issues, go to **legion.org/resolutions**.

On a local level, many American Legion posts advocate for town policies, city ordinances and state laws. Departments often testify before legislatures and provide policy advice to governors. We simply do not endorse, support or campaign for political parties or candidates.

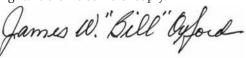
If you care about economic opportunity, VA health care, veterans employment, a strong national defense, immigration policy and other important issues, study the candidates' positions and vote according to who best represents your view. Passing up the opportunity to vote is a disservice to those who fought for that right and the millions of people around the world who still yearn for a free ballot.

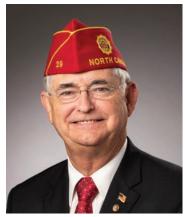
American Legion posts are encouraged to host forums, debates and town halls where candidates can explain their positions. Even the perception of favoritism should be avoided, and all candidates should be offered the same opportunity. While it's permissible to wear an American Legion cap at an issue-oriented forum, it's not advisable to wear one at a campaign rally or partisan event. Like all U.S. citizens, Legionnaires are free to run for office, but this should be done outside their capacity as members of our organization.

The first generation of Legionnaires fully understood the value of the vote. At the 8th American Legion National Convention in 1926, delegates passed Resolution 346: Open Discussion of Public Questions. In short, they called upon American Legion members "to exercise the privilege and duty of the elective franchise in an intelligent and unselfish manner as an obligation of citizenship in time of peace upon the same high plane as that of military service in time of war."

They further resolved to urge members "to participate in all nonpartisan activities for the good of the community, and generally in every way maintain a watchful vigilance educationally, economically and politically in order that our liberty may be preserved and that all citizens may be equal before the law."

The names of more than 58,000 men and women of my generation are etched on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. Let's remember how precious is this right. It didn't come cheaply.





National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford

MEMORANDA

GET OUT THE VOTE

The American Legion's "Get Out the Vote" program helps posts encourage voter turnout in their communities. The guide "Vote America," produced by the Americanism Division, is downloadable from the national website.

legion.org/publications

(317) 630-1203

FALL MEETINGS

In mid-August, The American Legion's National Executive Committee passed Res. 6 via email to conduct October's Fall Meetings virtually, due to the pandemic. Coverage of the meetings and other events will be posted online.

@ legion.org

NATIONAL OFFICERS

Res. 3, passed by the NEC this spring via email to cancel the 2020 national convention in Louisville, Ky., set the elected and appointed national American Legion officers for the 2019-2020 year in their positions until the close of the next national convention, scheduled for Aug. 27-Sept. 2, 2021, in Phoenix. Reacquaint yourself with the officers on the national website's leadership gallery.

legion.org/about

A FOUNDATION OF HOPE

FOR DISABLED VETERANS

I was about to give up...
I wouldn't have known where to go.

Korean War Army veteran Willie Alvin Cousin, who received long-overdue and wrongly denied VA disability benefits after his case was reopened and won by American Legion Department Service Officer K. Robert Lewis

FOR MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES IN NEED

These were important things. It helped them not get behind in their rent... It helped them put food in the refrigerator.

Coast Guard Vice Commandant Adm. Charlie Ray after American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance helped more than 3,120 children whose active-duty families were affected by the federal government shutdown



Your gift provides hope for disabled veterans and children in need.

The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation, formerly the American Legion Endowment Fund, delivers vital financial support for service officers worldwide who are working on VA disability claims for more than 700,000 U.S. military veterans at any one time, all the time. The fund also supplies American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance cash grants for military and veteran families with minor children at home, who have encountered hardships beyond their control and need short-term help covering the costs of shelter, food, utilities, clothing or other necessities.



The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation

www.legion.org/donateVCF



\$3.7 million

Amount in American Legion Legacy scholarships disbursed through May 2020 to 401 children of U.S. military personnel who died or became over 50 percent disabled on active duty since 9/11

100

Minimum number of attendees at Homestead, Fla., American Legion Post 43 for a socially distanced birthday celebration in honor of Pearl Harbor survivor and World War II Navy veteran John E. Hatcher. Legionnaires, police officers, firefighters and other first responders were among the well-wishers.



> 250,000

Protective face masks donated to The American Legion from Taiwan in a ceremony in Washington, D.C., on July 28. American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford received the gift from Taiwan Ambassador Bi-khim Hsaio and quickly sent 10,000 of the masks to the Soldiers Home in Holyoke, Mass., for use by residents and staff there.

▶ 750,000

Minimum number of VA benefits claims applications in process at any one time for veterans using free assistance from accredited American Legion service officers.

"I went out to all our normal donors and said, 'Look, we can't do a ride right now, but that doesn't take into account that these children still need help with their education.' Our chapter alone, we collected \$19,000. That is only through donations, through the members donating themselves and our corporate donors that we have.

"We can't say, 'Well, this year we can't help you out because of COVID.' We have to continue pushing forward and doing the best we can ... It's important to us to ensure that we donate money so these children will have a chance at a higher education."

Richland County, S.C., American Legion Riders Chapter 6
Director L.Z. Harrison, on local efforts to keep the Legacy
Scholarship Fund growing, even though the pandemic forced the
cancellation of its biggest annual fundraiser, the national American
Legion Legacy Run



2,000

Minimum number of people who registered and began logging miles in the first week after the national 100 Miles for Hope campaign launched Aug. 3 to raise awareness of the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation. The program offers participants the opportunity to walk, run, swim, motorcycle, bicycle or propel themselves however they wish for 100 miles through Nov. 11. Registrants receive a moisture-wicking shirt, and



finishers may download, customize and print a certificate of completion.

Register for 100 Miles for Hope:

legion.org/emblemsales

Donate to the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation:

R legion.org/donate



> 50

Apple iPads purchased and delivered July 30 to the Minneapolis VA Health Care System, thanks to an \$18,000 American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors grant. The iPads will be used to help patients communicate safely with family and loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic.

100

U.S. flags flown from 90 Kansas American Legion Riders' motorcycles in a memorial procession to honor former Army Sqt. Justin Hicks, who died July 17 after suffering with traumatic brain injury from an improvised explosive device blast during one of his three combat deployments in the war on terrorism



American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Chairman Ralph Bozella Photo by Lucas Carter

American Legion and VBA team up for tele-townhall meeting

"We want our veterans to know that VA is truly changing," VA Undersecretary for Benefits Paul Lawrence said in an Aug. 12 tele-townhall meeting co-hosted by The American Legion. "We are far from perfect, but we are better today than we were just a few years ago."

American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Chairman Ralph Bozella joined the Veterans Benefits Administration's top official in leading the event, during which veterans across the country expressed their thoughts on issues ranging from benefit decision delays to Agent Orange to Legion-supported PAWS Act legislation that would provide puppies – future service animals – for veterans coping with post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I appreciate the undersecretary's accessibility and his work to make VBA more transparent and easier to understand," Bozella said. "To me, he's brought a whole new level of transparency to veterans benefits. These types of town halls are the events that can and do make a difference in the lives of veterans."

FROM NATIONAL TO YOU

Get Out the Vote

The American Legion encourages active participation in the democratic process as a part of responsible citizenship. For a century, the nonpartisan organization has encouraged local posts to serve their communities as venues for candidate forums and polling places.

To assist local American Legion Family efforts to drive voter registration and participation, National Headquarters offers Vote America, an updated publication that provides guidance to conduct local "Get Out the Vote" campaigns. The guide strongly reminds Legionnaires to maintain nonpartisan neutrality in election activities. As a federally chartered veterans service organization, The American Legion cannot endorse any candidate, coordinate activities or provide financial support to a candidate. Download the booklet online.

@ legion.org/vote

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Legiontown USA

Legiontown USA is a national web platform that allows members to post stories and images on a variety of topics, including:

- **VOLUNTEERING** to share ways in which posts are selflessly serving their communities
- MY U.S. FLAG to show American Legion Family respect for the colors of our country
- ► MY WWII STORY to honor the greatest generation for the 75th anniversary of World War II's end
- ▶ WHY I LOVE MY POST to share with others the passion Legionnaires have for the organization
- ▶ 100 MILES FOR HOPE to document ways in which members are taking a healthy path to help the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation
- ▶ WOMEN VETERANS to highlight the service of female military personnel and veterans
- ▶ BOYS STATE, BASEBALL, ORATORICAL CONTEST and YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS

Submissions are edited for clarity and reviewed for legal compliance. Postings are easily shared on social media with one click at the bottom of each story.

@ legion.org/legiontown

U.S. membership in NATO



SUPPORT

Andrew Holland

■ Holland is the American Security Project's chief operating officer.



THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Supporters of the North American

Treaty Organization (NATO) call it

the most successful military alliance

in history. Critics say it is outdated

and costly for the United States.

OPPOSE

Ted Galen Carpenter

■ Carpenter is a senior fellow in defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute.

It's useful to look at our global place in the world to see if the institutions created decades ago still fit the needs of today. The intergovernmental military alliance known as NATO has come under attack by some because it seems to place other countries' needs above.

other countries' needs above U.S. interests.

The idea of "collective security" that NATO espouses was born from the lessons learned in the 20th century. Out of the ashes of a ruined Europe, Americans

learned how aggressor nations can draw an entire world into war. Now, in the 21st century, the U.S. presence in NATO continues to ensure the trans-Atlantic peace.

Today's security threats are not as simple. While NATO certainly does protect its members from the Russian tank divisions and nuclear weapons that align along member states' borders, it also provides collective security against threats such as terrorism, cyberattacks and even global pandemics. Indeed, the only time that NATO's collective defense clause was invoked was immediately after the 9/11 attacks, as NATO members rushed to support U.S. forces responding to the attack. Today, in the face of a new security threat, NATO is helping member countries respond to COVID-19.

Finally, as Vladimir Putin's Russia interferes in elections, steals land from neighbors and prepares cyberweapons to undermine infrastructure, the continuing presence of the United States in NATO deters Russian military intervention.

It is right to question the usefulness of NATO. But if NATO didn't exist today, we'd have to create it. Let's resolve to "keep America in" to maintain the trans-Atlantic peace.

NATO is the poster child for an obsolete U.S. foreign policy. It was created in 1949 to shield a weak democratic Europe from a totalitarian enemy. Today's Europe bears no resemblance to that situation. The European Union (EU) collectively

has both a larger population and economy than does America. The EU nations can easily afford to build their own defenses.

At the same time, the security threat they face is a pale shadow of the menace

once posed by the Soviet Union. Russia is a conventional great power, not a messianic totalitarian state, and its population and economy are much smaller. Furthermore, Moscow's annual military spending, which is barely 8 percent of Washington's, is declining. That is a strange pattern for a country supposedly intent on aggression.

Finally, NATO involves vast U.S. obligations with few corresponding benefits. We cannot even count on European allies to support the United States in a crisis. A survey conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations in 2019 found that overwhelming majorities in 14 EU member states wanted their countries to remain neutral if a conflict occurred between the United States and China. Incredibly, that same pattern existed with respect to a showdown between the United States and Russia, even though the European countries would seem to have major security interests at stake in such a fight.

Today's NATO is a one-sided arrangement. The United States incurs most of the costs and risks while European members reap most of the benefits. It's time to retire this Cold War-era institutional dinosaur.

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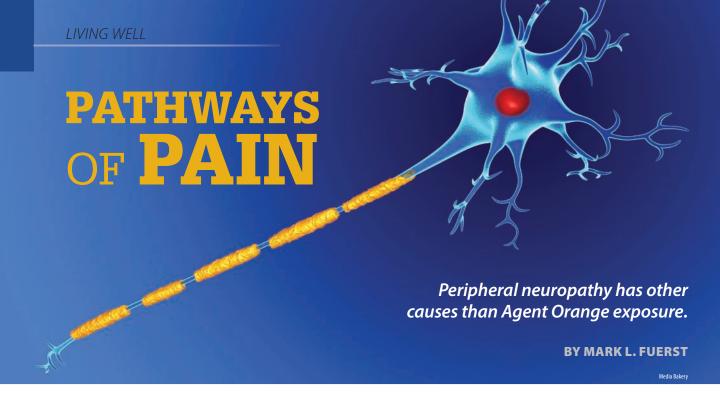
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Agent Orange is one of the most well-known causes of peripheral neuropathy (PN) among veterans, but one can be eligible for a disability rating for many other medical problems.

VA presumes that veterans' early-onset PN is related to their exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during service when the disease appears within one year of exposure to a degree of at least 10 percent disabling by VA's rating regulations. Veterans who served in Vietnam, the Korean demilitarized zone or another area where Agent Orange was sprayed may be eligible for a free Agent Orange registry health exam.

VA defines peripheral neuropathy as a condition of the peripheral nervous system, which consists of nerves outside the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms include numbness, tingling or prickling in the toes or fingers in early stages. This may spread to the feet or hands and cause burning, throbbing or shooting pain that is worse at night. Other symptoms include pain equally in both sides of the body (in both hands or both feet), muscle weakness, loss of balance or coordination, and extreme sensitivity to touch.

The peripheral nerves are like cables that connect the different parts of a computer. According to the National Institutes of Health, nerve signaling in neuropathy is disrupted in three ways: loss of signals normally sent (like a broken wire), inappropriate signaling when there shouldn't be any (like static on a telephone line), and errors that distort the messages being sent (like a wavy television picture). Symptoms depend on the type of nerve fibers affected and the type and severity of damage, and may develop over days, weeks or years.

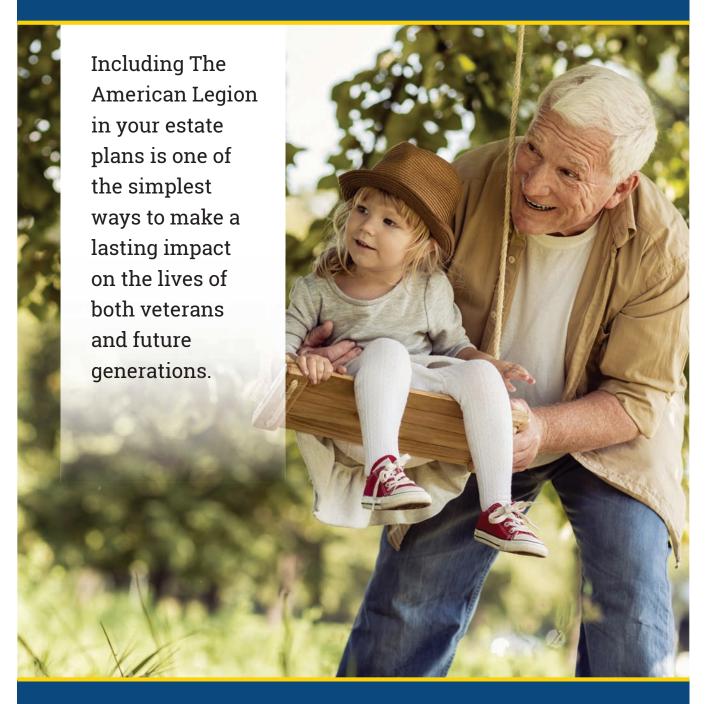
PN is often misdiagnosed due to the complex array of symptoms. An estimated 20 million or more Americans have some form of PN, but not all those with symptoms receive proper testing. VA disability ratings depend on the severity and frequency of symptoms.

Other common causes of PN among veterans include:

- **Diabetes** Up to 70 percent of diabetics have mild to severe forms of damage to sensory, motor and autonomic nerves, causing numbness, tingling or burning feet, one-sided bands of pain, and numbness and weakness on the trunk or pelvis. Any veteran who was diagnosed with diabetes in service or whose diabetes manifested while on active duty is eligible for service connection.
- Vascular and blood problems Reduced flow of oxygen in the blood to peripheral nerves can cause nerve-tissue damage. Smoking and narrowing of the arteries from high blood pressure or atherosclerosis (fatty deposits on the inside of blood vessel walls) can lead to PN.
- Autoimmune diseases One's immune system may mistakenly attack the body's own tissues, causing inflammation including in nerve fibers. Multiple sclerosis (MS), lupus and rheumatoid arthritis are systemic autoimmune diseases that cause neuropathic pain. Autoimmune diseases are often found among Gulf War veterans.
- Hormonal imbalances Hypothyroidism is another condition often seen among Gulf War veterans. When thyroid hormones slow production, the

See PAIN on page 16

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PAIN continued from page 14

metabolism also slows down, leading to fluid retention and swollen tissues that put pressure on peripheral nerves, causing pain.

- **Kidney and liver disorders** These disorders can lead to abnormally high amounts of toxic substances in the blood, and damage nerve tissues.
- **Certain cancers and benign tumors** Tumors sometimes infiltrate or press on nerve fibers. Also, certain chemotherapy drugs used to treat cancer cause PN in 30 to 40 percent of patients.

• Infections Viral infections that cause shingles, West Nile virus, cytomegalovirus and herpes target sensory fibers and can cause sharp pain.

To diagnose PN, a doctor will typically request a medical history, physical and neurological exams, body fluid tests and genetic tests. Additional tests to help determine the nature and extent of PN may include physiological tests of nerve function and radiological imaging.

Mark L. Fuerst is a Brooklyn-based health and fitness writer.



Split decisions

Some people split their pills to make their medicine (and money) go a little further. But WebMD warns that many medications cannot be safely split. Much can go wrong, including:

- Hyper-accurate dosing on some drugs, making even a small difference in the two halves of a pill a health risk.
- Split pills turning to powder, making it difficult to divide equally.
- The difficulty of splitting pills cleanly with unsteady hands or impaired vision.

To avoid these serious, and in some cases life-threatening, issues, WebMD advises people to consult with their doctors or pharmacists. Scored pills are easier to split evenly, but that doesn't always mean a pill is safe to split. Also, check the package insert to see if the FDA has approved a drug for splitting.

Moreover, some pills cannot be split, no matter what a pharmacist or doctor might say. For example, a pill with a hard outer coat is produced that way to allow it to be easily absorbed into the body. Splitting it can make it harder to swallow and even change the way your body absorbs the medicine.

Extended-release pills are specially formulated to deliver a certain dosage of medicine over a certain period of time. If split, such a pill could lose this potency. Because these capsules contain powder or gel, they cannot be split.

If a physician or pharmacist gives the green light and it's safe

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

to split according to those guidelines, WebMD advises using a pill splitter, washing hands before and after using the pill splitter, and asking the pharmacist for instructions.

Breathing easy

Several months into the pandemic, face masks have become a big part of public – and even private – life. For those who weren't used to wearing such coverings as part of a job or hobby, the transition may have been difficult, and some may still struggle.

Cliff Dryden, director of respiratory therapy at New York-Presbyterian Hospital's Weill Cornell Medical Center, identifies some common challenges of wearing masks, including getting winded more easily, feeling the need to breathe harder, and skin irritation.

"There's definitely an impact," Dryden says at NYP's Health Matters site. "A face mask is designed to allow you to function, but you won't be able to function at 100 percent capacity."

His advice for optimal mask-wearing includes:

- Let yourself get accustomed to the mask.
- Don't wear a mask unless necessary.
- If you lose your breath, open wide and breathe deeply until you get it back.
- If you can find a space without people, take your mask off for a bit and breathe deeply.
- Stand or sit up straight.
- Make workouts shorter and less intensive. Break them into smaller pieces. For outdoor exercise, cloth masks may be preferable to medical ones.

Those with pre-existing breathing conditions such as asthma or COPD especially should follow this advice, Dryden says. "People with asthma need to keep their peak flow meter and bronchodilators with them in case they have an attack I advise them to try to stay more aware of their breathing while wearing a mask."



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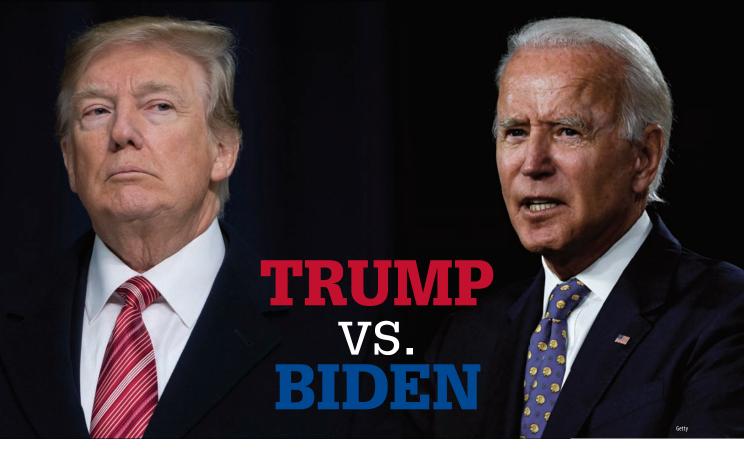
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Nominees address issues critical to veterans.

reater access to VA health care. COVID-19. Unemployment. Protests and violence in U.S. cities. Military readiness.

When veterans go to the polls in November, these key issues will determine how they vote.

In this exclusive Q&A, two candidates for the U.S. presidency – incumbent Republican President Donald Trump, and Democratic nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden – outline their positions on some of the main issues of interest to The American Legion and its members.

With no clear end in sight to the COVID-19 pandemic and elderly veterans among those at greatest risk, what is your plan to lead VA through the crisis?

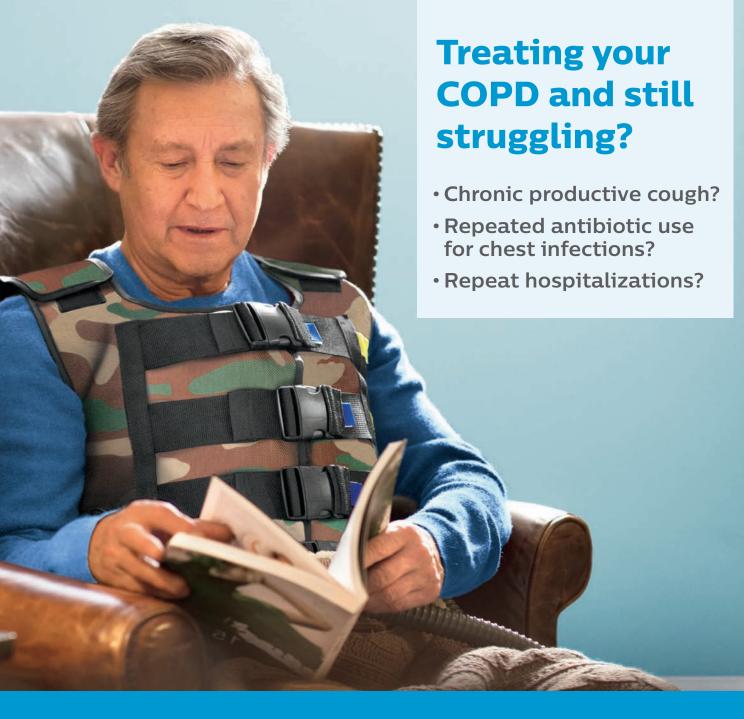
TRUMP: VA has been critical to our COVID response, serving veterans tirelessly and effectively while assisting as a backup health-care system for all Americans. We took early action with VA to protect our entire veteran population, testing hundreds of thousands of veterans, treating thousands, maintaining critical personal protective equipment, and hiring over 10,000 additional employees after providing additional authority to hire retired doctors and nurses.

We gave special focus to our elderly veterans,

particularly those at our 134 VA-run nursing homes, and deployed VA personnel to struggling state-run nursing homes to assist them, as well. We utilized and expanded telehealth technology to continue to treat veterans safely wherever they might be, shifted Veterans Benefits Administration exams to virtual, and reached more than 1 million veterans through telephone town halls.

In coordination with FEMA, over 45 states and territories requested assistance with COVID-19 response from VA. We opened VA beds in New York City and New Jersey to civilians as those hospital systems faced strain. Through effective leadership, VA has been instrumental in COVID response and will continue to serve veterans and the nation.

BIDEN: COVID-19 is a public-health challenge turned into a crisis by a total failure of leadership from the Trump administration. It underscores that challenges to our nation's security can come from things like pandemics and climate change, in addition to the political-military threats we face from China, Russia and others. VA has unique operational capacity to support our response to this pandemic, especially when it comes to protecting elderly veterans living in community living centers and state-run veterans homes. But the key to



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solving the public-health crisis is following the science with clear public-health guidance from our government, rapidly expanding our capacity for testing and contact tracing, ensuring essential workers have the personal protective equipment they need, and focusing on developing and equitably distributing therapeutics and a safe and effective vaccine, when one becomes available. I will ensure VA has the necessary resources and leadership to guarantee veterans have access to testing and the care they have earned, while also ensuring VA is ready to fulfill its fourth mission: improving our nation's ability to respond in times of crisis.

How will your administration move forward to improve regular access to VA health care and timeliness for appointments at a time of such high demand – and shortages of nurses and other key medical providers?

BIDEN: I commit to always providing high-quality care for veterans enrolled in VA health care. I will use the full power of the federal government to protect veterans from the threat of COVID-19 and to ensure that those who are infected receive the best possible care. My administration will strike the right balance between VA and community care, providing true accountability along with timely, quality care to veterans. This administration has

underperformed on the rollout of the MISSION Act, constantly underfunding the community care program and creating unnecessary headaches for veterans with referrals, scheduling and payment. I will work to ensure that caregivers are fully integrated into the veteran's care team and prioritize research for emerging service-connected conditions like toxic exposures and traumatic brain injury. I will expand VA eHealth and telemedicine to provide rural veterans access to the best providers. I will provide VA with the flexibility and tools to hire and retain top medical talent and invest in creating training opportunities to ensure a pipeline of needed health-care professionals.

TRUMP: VA has been totally transformed by my administration, and veterans can see it. Veteran trust ratings are reaching all-time highs. At the end of the Obama-Biden administration, veteran overall trust in VA stood at 60 percent; it's now at 80 percent. Even better, 90.1 percent of veterans now trust the VA health care they receive, and in a Veterans of Foreign Wars survey, nearly three-quarters of veterans reported improvements at their local VA. VA has done more internal appointments than ever before: 59.9 million in fiscal 2019. Ratings by respected outside experts show that for access and quality of care, VA meets or exceeds private standards. During COVID-19, we granted VA additional authorities to hire more than 10.000

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additional medical professionals to provide for veterans and address the pandemic.

We've also passed groundbreaking legislation to give veterans real choice to go where it's in their best interest to be treated. Veteran's Choice, my nickname for the MISSION Act, is so good the press continues to claim it was a creation of the Obama-Biden presidency when their policy was a stop-gap emergency response to their administration's scandalous treatment of veterans. Democrats fought for years to limit outside access to care. My Veteran's Choice policy, promised to you in 2016, recognized that we could support both care within VA and in the community with a focus on the veteran's best interest: it is permanent, simplifies eligibility, expands access, and has all-new options such as urgent care without prior authorizations. It's no wonder veterans love it.

Suicide prevention and mental health care remain top concerns of The American Legion. What is your plan to improve the situation?

TRUMP: We are fighting to end veteran suicide like no one ever has before, marshalling every resource of the federal government and civil society. I want to thank The American Legion for calling on Congress to pass Senate Bill 785, and I call upon the Democrats to immediately pass this life-saving bill without additional delay tactics.

In 2019, I signed an executive order creating the PREVENTS (President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide) Task Force, an interagency task force dedicated to ending veteran suicide. The task force presented its roadmap to me earlier this year, and its primary areas of focus are a national communications campaign to change the culture around seeking help for mental health care, innovative research that teaches us more about risk factors that lead to suicide, and partnerships with civil society so we can reach the seven out of 10 veterans who die by suicide who have no connection to VA health care.

That's why my administration has supported programs that empower civil society groups – like The American Legion and others – to receive grants to provide suicide-prevention services. A bill that would do just that passed the Senate unanimously, has tremendous support from VSOs, and is now sitting in the House. It's now up to Vice President Biden to call upon House Democrats to put the bill up for a vote without more delay.

BIDEN: As a society, we need to work together to eliminate discrimination against those who are suffering and struggling with mental health. Veterans are at an elevated risk of dying by suicide – and the rates for veterans exceed the national averages and continue to rise among our youngest veterans. Even one death by suicide is devastating,



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and we must stem this tide. Within the first 200 days of taking office, my administration will publish a comprehensive, public health and cross-sector approach to addressing suicide in veterans, servicemembers and their families.

The Trump administration has grossly mismanaged VA, at one point leaving millions of dollars dedicated to suicide prevention efforts unused. It's wrong. In a Biden administration, DoD's Suicide Prevention Office and VA will have the resources and staff they need to make smart investments with allocated funds. I will ensure that all those in need of care have quality and timely support by strengthening coordination with stakeholders and the private sector.

My administration will also tackle the issues that contribute to higher suicide risk, such as PTSD, sexual assault and harassment. We will develop better interventions to mitigate pain and economic vulnerability and address safe firearm storage. I will increase access to mental health treatment by enforcing full mental health parity and ensuring all Americans have access to high-quality mental health care, regardless of their insurance coverage.

VA's effort to launch digital electronic health-care records management stalled in 2020 due to the pandemic. What will your administration do to get VA-DoD-integrated medical records management back on track?

BIDEN: The agency charged with meeting the needs of veterans – their health care and earned benefits, and the cemeteries that memorialize their honor in death – should not be limited by obsolete tools and outdated management practices. My administration will upgrade VA's delivery systems by leveraging commercial best practices and modern technologies that meet the unique demands of a public-sector mission.

VA's new electronic health-care records (EHR) system simply must succeed. Achieving success requires transparency and truth telling – inside VA, to Congress and to veterans. VA must transparently report what functionality will, and will not, be implemented at the initial (so-called IOC) sites, and how well that functionality is working. We know from DoD's experience that the initial deployment of new EHRs can be hampered by inadequate training and poor communications between clinicians and patients. Even today, DoD still does not have full data exchange between its legacy system and the new one.

In my administration, VA will ensure that the new system is safe and useful for clinicians, and that veterans will continue to be able to access their information no matter where they receive care. We will move forward to new installations only when all three conditions – safety, utility and access – are completely met, rather than rushing to declare success at the expense of veterans' health.

TRUMP: Many of this administration's fundamental changes to VA will never be visible. VA's transition to electronic medical health records is one of the most exciting technological changes in our history and will enable a veteran to have one combined, lifelong medical record from their first day at boot camp. VA is working tirelessly to release this technology as soon as possible.

Substantial progress has been made to reduce the backlog of undecided VA benefits claims, but much of that has been slowed by the pandemic, and thousands of claims are hung up in the remand or appeals processes. What needs to happen now?

TRUMP: We've made historic progress at reducing backlogs in VA benefits claims. I signed the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, and VA modernized the process for appealing VA decisions to provide more timely and consistent outcomes. In the last fiscal year, VA completed more than 95,000 appeals decisions, a record high, and they are on pace to exceed that number this fiscal year despite the challenges of COVID-19. As of July, VA has reduced the appeals backlog left by the Obama-Biden administration from more than 400,000 to 200,000 in just 18 months. Under my presidency, average processing times have gone from 130 days to 90 days.

BIDEN: No veteran should have to wait indefinitely for a claim to be decided. During the Obama-Biden administration, the VBA, with strong support from the White House, transformed and digitized the claims process, resulting in the elimination of nearly 90 percent of a decades-old backlog. Unfortunately, the backlog has exploded to nearly 200,000 under Trump's mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic. A Biden-Harris administration will fix the problem.

VA's decision to suspend all in-person disability exams due to the pandemic has only worsened this concern. VA must develop and release a plan to safely resume compensation and pension exams. This may include opening contract sites where their sole purpose is well-person care in areas where it is now safe to do so. It may also require plans to conduct exams, or portions of the exam, virtually.





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Ensuring timely processing and consideration of all claims is essential. We should work toward eliminating any backlog, anywhere it exists in the process. A Biden-Harris administration will use performance data to ascertain the nature of the problem and develop sensible solutions.

VA should have the ability to employ appropriate tools for managing surges and responding during emergencies. This will require a balance of on-site and remote options for employees and offering or mandating overtime as needed to clear backlogs. In a Biden administration, VA will expand tele-exams and telehealth, especially to reach rural veterans or those at risk from COVID-19.

Veteran unemployment – as with most of the workforce in the pandemic – is rising again. What can you do to improve the job outlook?

BIDEN: Veteran unemployment is too high, and I will work hard to expand economic opportunities and create meaningful jobs for veterans. When the Obama-Biden administration began, during the Great Recession, post-9/11 veteran unemployment was above 10 percent. The Obama-Biden administration worked hard with DoD, VA, the nonprofit sector and the private sector, to build partnerships and bring people together to hire veterans and their family members. Between April 2011 and January 2017, the Joining Forces initiative secured commitments from employers to hire more than 1.5 million veterans and military spouses.

A Biden-Harris administration will:

- Ensure DoD, VA and the Department of Labor continue to improve the Transition Assistance Program so it's relevant to today's job market.
- Ensure that more transitioning servicemembers are able to access job training and placement services prior to the end of active duty. By expanding private-sector relationships through programs like SkillBridge, we will give qualified transitioning servicemembers the opportunity to start building meaningful civilian careers as early as possible.
- Work with the Department of Labor to enforce the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) hiring benchmark among federal contractors and subcontractors.
- Support and promote hiring of veterans and military spouses, as well as corporate mentorship between veteran-owned businesses and existing contractors to support veteran entrepreneurship.
- Work with schools to ensure veterans and family members affected by COVID-19 can use their benefits.

- Crack down on fraud and unfair business practices targeting veterans and the military.
- Close the 90/10 loophole on GI Bill and Tuition Assistance dollars to keep for-profit bad actors from raiding benefits servicemembers and veterans have earned.

TRUMP: My administration's relentless focus on the economy led to some of the best employment numbers in history among all groups, including veterans. While pressed by COVID, we will continue to fight for our economy by reducing taxes, slashing bureaucracy and regulations that hinder business development, and providing support to programs that benefit veterans.

For veterans who are suffering, we suspended collection of veteran debts to VA so veterans can focus on staying safe and healthy during a time of economic anxiety.

As racial tensions last summer grew to a head, calls were made to defund the police. How can you close the divide between law enforcement and the public, especially in cities where protests and violence have occurred?

TRUMP: The violence tearing apart our inner cities is ruining the opportunities of vulnerable Americans, and we will not stand for it. At The American Legion's 1962 national convention, part of your shared definition of Americanism was that "law and order are essential to the preservation of Americanism while lawlessness and violence are distinctly un-American." I couldn't agree more.

In June, I signed an executive order to address some of the core issues and begin bridging that divide. With a focus on certification and credentialing, information sharing, officer training for mental health, homelessness and addiction issues, and a grant program to assist in use-of-force training and de-escalation techniques, we are approaching the issue holistically and vigorously.

Generations of Americans, like yourselves, have marched, fought, bled and died to safeguard the promise of our founding document and protect our shared inalienable rights. We will not fail you.

BIDEN: I began my campaign with the recognition that we're in a battle for the soul of the nation. Four more years of division and intolerance from our nation's leadership could forever fracture the important bond between police officers and the communities they serve and protect. The discord we face today is made so much worse by our current president, who leads through division. I will not drive a wedge between the police and

The Vietnam Veterans Tribute Thompson

HONORING ALL THOSE WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM

Our men and women came from all over the country, from all walks of life, to fight for freedom on the other side of the world. They served with honor, dignity, and courage. All gave some, some gave all, and many are still missing and unaccounted for. As a nation, we owe all of our Vietnam Veterans a debt that can never be repaid.

Nothing about the Vietnam War was easy. Those who were there remember the swampy grasslands, rice paddies, dense jungles, the heat and an elusive enemy; a war that took place halfway around the world in a country divided by decades of bitter history.

Few generations faced a more daunting challenge than those who fought in Southeast Asia. Few generations are more deserving of our gratitude and respect. To honor all those who served in Vietnam, America Remembers presents the Vietnam Veterans Tribute Thompson. Craftsmen commissioned specifically for this project by America Remembers decorate each Thompson in elegant 24-karat gold artwork on a mirror-polished nickel-decorated receiver. Issued in an exclusive limited edition of only 1,000 Tributes, this handsome firearm captures the courage and sacrifice of all those who fought for freedom in Vietnam.

The Tribute is a working semi-automatic Thompson submachine gun in caliber .45 ACP, one of the most memorable American infantry weapons of all time. Like many dedicated Americans, the Thompson served proudly in Vietnam. We've taken this combat-tested classic and transformed it into a work of art. The result is a stunning presentation firearm that will stand as a testament and lasting Tribute to all Vietnam veterans.

The Thompson: An American Original

Vietnam was considered the "last great war" for the Tommy Gun. Though it saw less use than in previous wars, it was a popular weapon for American and South Vietnamese soldiers. The Thompson was a "warhorse" which was relied on for its superior stopping power and dependability.

Like the dedicated American warriors who served in Vietnam, the Thompson served proudly in Vietnam, continuing a tradition of excellence first established during WWII, and later in Korea. This stunning presentation frearm is a lasting tribute to all of America's veterans and links them forever in time with their brothersin-arms who fought earlier wars.

We know there will never be another American-made firearm like the Thompson submachine gun. And there will never be more dedicated men and women than those who bravely served their country in Vietnam.

Much like the generations of warriors who came before, those who served with valor in Vietnam deserve their place in American history. They didn't hesitate to put their lives on the line and give up everything in defense of our liberty and freedom. Some made the ultimate sacrifice. Others returned home to a divided nation. All of them deserve our gratitude.

During the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, there has been a strong interest in firearm Tributes honoring those who served in Vietnam. Demand for this Tribute is expected to be strong. Order now to guarantee your place in the edition. We will arrange delivery through the licensed firearms dealer of your choice (not available in CA, CT, MD, NY). If for any reason you are not completely satisfied with your Tribute, you may return it in original, unfired condition within 30 days for a complete and courteous refund.

Honor Vietnam Veterans With This Exclusive Offer

If you are a veteran who answered the call to duty in Vietnam, or if you wish to honor your father, husband, brother, friend or other family member, the Vietnam Veterans Tribute Thompson is sure to become a cherished addition to your collection. Order today to secure your Tribute honoring those who proudly served our nation in Vietnam.

▼ Both sides of the receiver feature emblems that honor Vietnam War veterans. The banner reads: "A Grateful Nation Remembers," and inside the oval is a lone American soldier, the distinctive silhouette of Vietnam and a pair of U.S. military helicopters. The emblem on the right side is framed with a banner reading: "Vietnam Veterans Tribute Thompson".

▼ Left side of the receiver features a soldier with his M60 machine gun--nicknamed "The Pig" for its hefty size. The M60 unleashed a fury of firepower on the enemy. Also featured is a M48-A3 Patton tank providing cover as troops enter a village. The M48 was a workhorse during the Vietnam War.



A Right side also features a soldier scanning the distance for enemy movement. A pair of M48 tanks make their way on the ground while the sky is abuzz with helicopters, which played such an important role during the Vietnam War. On the far end of the receiver, you'll find a Marine and his M16. Along with the Huey, the legendary M16 has become a symbol of combat service in Vietnam. Introduced to the battlefield in 1964, the M16 was a lightweight assault rifle that proved invaluable in jungle firefights. Right side features an image of the iconic Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal presented by Republic of Vietnam to members of the United States military who completed at least six months of duty in the war, with a frame reading: "Vietnam War - All Gave Some, Some Gave All." Below it you'll find a banner that reads: "Lest We Forget."

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communities that they faithfully serve, because the division we see in our country is only going to make life worse for police, not better. It will make it harder to patrol dangerous areas, not easier.

As a nation, we must continuously strive to improve our policing tactics and strategies while maintaining our commitment to keep our communities safe, enforce the law, and meet the needs of victims of crime. Black mothers and fathers should feel confident that their children are safe walking the streets of America. And when a police officer pins on that shield and walks out the door, the officer's family should know they'll come home at the end of the day.

It is in the public's interest and in law enforcement's interest to hold all officers to the highest standards and to ensure swift action to address abuses of power. We should give police departments the resources needed to implement meaningful policies - policies we all agree on, like increased body-worn cameras and diversity on the force. And we need to condition other federal dollars on completing those reforms and others, like adopting a national use-of-force standard. Additionally, I will reinvigorate the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program with a \$300 million investment so police departments have enough money to hire a sufficient number of officers so their officers can get out of their cruisers and walk the streets, engaging with and getting to know members of their communities.

We need to prevent 911 calls in scenarios where police should not be our first responders. Every time the police are called to be a social worker, marriage counselor or mental health professional is a lost opportunity to further a proactive investigation or address violent crime. This requires making serious investments in mental health services, drug treatment and prevention programs, and services for people experiencing homelessness. That certainly makes more sense than eliminating police departments or defunding the police.

President Trump is the candidate defunding the police. He is proposing to cut more than \$465 million in Justice Department aid to state and local law enforcement.

What will be your approach going forward to reduce illegal immigration?

BIDEN: Trump has waged an unrelenting assault on our values and our history as a nation of immigrants. It's wrong, and it stops when I'm elected president. The challenges we face will not

be solved by a constitutionally dubious "national emergency" to build a wall, by separating families, or by denying asylum to people fleeing persecution and violence. Addressing the Trump-created humanitarian crisis at our border, bringing our nation together, reasserting our core values and reforming our immigration system will require real leadership and real solutions. I am prepared on day one to deliver both.

As president, I will forcefully pursue policies that safeguard our security, provide a fair and just system of immigration that keeps families together, help grow and enhance our economy, and secure our cherished values. Like every nation, the United States has a right and a duty to secure our borders and protect our people. But we know immigrants and immigrant communities are not a threat to our security, and the government should never use xenophobia or fear tactics to scare voters for political gain. Nor are walls the right solution for our border. A wall is not a serious deterrent for sophisticated criminal organizations that employ border tunnels, semi-submersible vessels and aerial technology to overcome physical barriers at the border. We need smart, sensible policies that will strengthen our ability to catch the real threats we face by investing in new technology and improving screening procedures at our legal ports of entry.

We also know that the worst place to deal with irregular migration is at our own border. Rather than working in a cooperative manner with countries in the region to manage the crisis, Trump's erratic, enforcement-only approach is making things worse. The best way to solve this challenge is to address the underlying violence, instability and lack of opportunity that is compelling people to leave their homes in countries like El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in the first place. As vice president, I was the architect of a major program of U.S. assistance to advance reforms in Central America and reduce the number of people trying to come to our border by addressing the key factors driving migration. It was working until President Trump gutted the program. We must also work in partnership with neighboring countries on a regional and humane response to migration needs so that people don't feel the need to come in the first place.

TRUMP: Border security is national security. We are committed to safeguarding our borders. I was just at the wall in August; they've added 300 more miles. And they are funded for 733 miles. Seven hundred thirty-three miles are paid for. I promised I would build a wall, and it's being built to keep

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Americans safe and prosperous. Borders are a noncontroversial reality of every sovereign nation, and we will defend ours.

Customs and Border Patrol also prioritizes veteran hires. Roughly a third of CBP's staff has served in the military. CBP believes that veterans embody the CBP's core values of vigilance, integrity and service to country.

How will your administration work with the U.S. military to defend against multiple threats to national security and U.S. interests abroad?

TRUMP: Last year, I was proud to sign into law the largest-ever investment in the U.S. military. Before I came into office, the military endured deep and devastating budget cuts. Our military was depleted, and the Obama-Biden administration failed to give our military forces what they needed.

As candidate for president in 2016, I promised to reverse these crippling cuts and to ensure our military remains unchallenged and unrivaled anywhere in the world.

This year provides \$738 billion to ensure we are ready to take on near-peer competitors. That's an all-time record. In the history of our country, that's the highest amount we've ever spent on our military. And that's after \$700 billion in my first year, and \$716 billion in my second.

The American military has never been stronger thanks to our historic investments. We have reversed years of neglect by focusing on modernization and improving readiness. As our men and women have demonstrated, they are prepared to fight and win when called upon. With the help of allies, we destroyed the ISIS caliphate and killed its leader, al-Baghdadi, an acknowledged terrorist leader. We created a new military branch, the U.S. Space Force, to ensure our national security by strategically protecting our interests in expanding landscapes of cyberspace and space.

We are prepared and willing to fight when and wherever needed to protect American lives and interests. The warriors who keep us safe have now, and always, my undying commitment.

BIDEN: Defending the security of our nation is the first and highest responsibility of any president and his or her administration. A Biden-Harris administration will draw on all elements of U.S. national power, including the military, to secure our country against potential threats. We will use our military strength to deter adversaries from taking aggressive action and to underwrite other elements of our national power. As president, I will

never hesitate to defend the American people, including through the use of force when necessary. But the use of force should be our last resort, not our first – used only to defend our vital interests, when the objective is clear and achievable, and with the informed consent of the American people.

What will the United States do under your administration to strengthen alliances with other nations against common global threats?

BIDEN: Immediately after taking office, a Biden-Harris administration will call our democratic allies together to address how we will harness our shared values and capacities, military and otherwise, to ensure our mutual security and to strengthen our collective ability to meet the threats we face around the world. After years of threats, bullying and outright hostility from the Trump administration toward our closest friends and partners, there is much repair work to be done. But our allies know me, and I know them. I've spent years working closely with world leaders, first in the Senate, including as chairman or ranking member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, then as vice president. Our NATO alliance and our alliances and partnerships in Asia will be critical to our success in dealing with Russia and China, as well as Iran, North Korea, violent extremist groups, and any other threats that emerge. A Biden-Harris administration will also leverage our alliances and partnerships to advance our economic security, combat climate change and address the threat of future pandemics. I will protect American interests by drawing on all the tools of our power, working alongside - not against - those who share our interests and values.

TRUMP: As I promised in 2016, we would form global alliances to solve global problems to defeat challenges like ISIS. Over 70 nations formed the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, led by the United States, to defeat ISIS once and for all so we can return our troops home and return our focus to investing in the continued growth and prosperity of the United States.

This summer, we brokered the first Middle East peace agreement in over 25 years between the United Arab Emirates and Israel, a historic Mideast peace deal that eluded the Obama-Biden administration. And now Afghan negotiators, under the purview of our United States special representative, have begun intra-Afghan peace negotiations between the Taliban and Afghan government to end America's longest war.

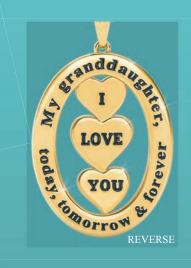
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SEPARATED WE SURVIVE

As COVID-19 drives a wedge between Americans, we need to remember how much unites us.

BY ALAN W. DOWD

common definition of patriotism reads something like this: affection for one's country, concern for the well-being of one's country, willingness to sacrifice for one's country. America's unique brand of patriotism enfolds that and more – namely, affection for the ideas of America's founding: the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; the notion that all people are created equal; limits on the reach and role of government.

Putting these definitions together helps us recognize the two kinds of patriots in an America transformed by COVID-19. Let's call them "publichealth patriots" and "individual-liberty patriots."

Individual-liberty patriots so deeply identify America with freedom – and being an American with freedom – that they bristle at limits on freedom. They hold that America's well-being – indeed its essence – is a function of freedom. They believe it's their civic duty to live free and take individual responsibility. They view COVID-19 as similar to past pandemics, recalling that America didn't shut down back in 1957 or 1968, criticizing government responses in 2020 as drastic, and believing life must go on in order to preserve individual liberty.

Public-health patriots love their country and countrymen so much that they're willing to limit

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freedom, sacrifice treasure and scale back the American way of life for the good of the whole. They believe it's their civic duty to prevent spread of the virus and promote social responsibility. They view COVID-19 as more dangerous than past pandemics, applaud government responses as prudent, and believe life must change in order to preserve public health.

Those who oppose the COVID-19 lockdowns do so in defense of freedom. That's patriotic. Consider the times Americans have stood up to government to protect or expand our liberties: Jefferson's insistence on a "bill of rights," legal challenges to the New Deal's overreach, Oliver Brown's fight for his daughter's education, Martin Luther King Jr.'s struggle for civil rights.

Those who call for shared sacrifice to fight COVID-19 do so for the greater good. That, too, is patriotic. Consider the shared sacrifice Americans have made to fight our enemies: meatless Mondays, price controls, suspension of habeas corpus, the 25 American military cemeteries dotting the globe.

DIVIDED This tension between *pluribus* and unum, "the general welfare" and "the pursuit of happiness," public good and individual liberty, is not new. What's new is that "separated we survive" seems to have supplanted "united we stand" as the motto of American patriotism.

Think about it: No matter how many times we hear the mantra of the COVID-19 age - "together apart" - the reality is that COVID-19 has physically and philosophically separated us.

Patriotism is bound up with being connected, being together. But COVID-19's lockdown and social-distancing messaging prevent - or at least curtail - that. We cannot participate in many of the rituals of American patriotism: the pregame national anthem, Memorial Day parades, Independence Day celebrations, campaign rallies. In-person voting has been severely limited in some states. For the first time in history, the U.S. House of Representatives conducted proxy voting.

By contrast, in the darkest hours of the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt reassured a throng of 150,000 that America could "face the

arduous days that lie before us" because of "the warm courage of national unity."

Likewise, after 9/11, members of Congress stood together on the steps of the Capitol and sang "God Bless America." President George W. Bush and Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle poignantly embraced following a joint session of Congress.

Such expressions of unity have been absent in COVID-19's wake. This is a function not only of our politics, which is fractured, but also our fear of this disease, which drives us away from one another – away from those places where we might bask in "the warm courage of national unity."

We need to find a way to forge a new spirit of unity and patriotism for this new era.

NEW COALITIONS One obvious area of common ground is where the COVID-19 crisis began: China.

Throughout U.S. history, external threats have served as a powerful unifying force. The British army's massacre of colonists in Boston and the British government's "intolerable acts" united planters and merchants, farmers and urbanites, Jeffersonians and Hamiltonians. Imperial Germany's "warfare against mankind" and diplomatic treachery spurred a pacifist America into the Great War. Japan's "unprovoked and dastardly attack" transformed an isolationist America into a global military juggernaut. The communist bloc's attempt to seize West Berlin and South Korea rallied Americans for the Cold War.

What happened in China in 2019-2020 may mark a similar turning point.

Beijing intentionally or incompetently – it's one or the other – allowed a local public-health problem to mushroom into a global pandemic. China then lied to the World Health Organization about COVID-19, ordered scientists not to share findings about COVID-19-genome sequencing and hoarded 2.5 billion pieces of personal protective equipment. And now Beijing is trying to parlay the resulting chaos into a geopolitical windfall.

Though separated and divided in many ways, the American people agree that Beijing cannot be allowed to profit from a global catastrophe that was literally made in China: 73 percent of Americans blame Beijing for COVID-19 deaths;

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THOUGH SEPARATED AND DIVIDED IN MANY WAYS, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AGREE THAT BEIJING CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO PROFIT FROM A GLOBAL CATASTROPHE THAT WAS QUITE LITERALLY MADE IN CHINA.

66 percent say they hold a negative view of China; 71 percent distrust Chinese strongman Xi Jinping. In the wake of Beijing's illegal island-building efforts, relentless cybersiege, military buildup and criminal mishandling of COVID-19, a new coalition of Americans is emerging for what increasingly looks like a new cold war. This coalition enfolds national-security hawks, human-rights activists, fair-traders, religious-freedom advocates, organized labor, public-health patriots, individual-liberty patriots and an army of jobless Americans, all enraged by what Beijing has wrought.

Policymakers are beginning to harness that fury. Dozens of bills in Congress call for punitive action against Beijing. One seeks "reimbursement" from China for the COVID-19 catastrophe. Another envisions ways to "quantify the harm ... to the health and economic well-being of the people of the United States" and proposes "a mechanism for delivering compensation" from China "to all affected nations." Others would develop avenues for seizing Chinese assets. Several deal with diversifying America's supply chains away from China. There are plans to create a \$25 billion "reshoring" fund to encourage U.S. firms to pull out of China.

On the military side of the ledger, a House bill proposes \$6 billion for an "Indo-Pacific Deterrence Initiative." This is a necessary first step, but it's just that. If America is indeed in the early phases of Cold War 2.0, Washington will need to return to Cold War-level defense spending. However, given America's massive debt, shifting back to a Cold War footing won't be easy. Today's defense budget is 3.1 percent of GDP. The Cold War average was more than twice that (and that's setting aside the supersized defense budgets during Korea). The 20th century taught us that military preparedness is the best way to prevent great-power conflict.

If unity at home is crucial in dealing with the Beijing behemoth, so is unity overseas. The preventable pandemic, oppression of Christians and Uighur Muslims, illegal islands, smothering of Hong Kong, intimidation of Taiwan, Himalayan border attack, hostile and sometimes racist "wolfwarrior diplomacy" – China's own behavior has laid the groundwork for a counter-China coalition.

Australia led the effort to launch international investigations into what Beijing did and didn't do about COVID-19, and recently unveiled plans to increase defense spending by 40 percent in the next decade.

In March, Japan began offering subsidies for firms to relocate factories outside China; 87 Japanese companies have already begun moving. In July, Japan started converting a helicopter ship into a full-fledged aircraft carrier (for F-35Bs).

Summer 2020 saw Indian citizens and firms launch a "boycott China" movement, while the Indian government fast-tracked purchases of tanks and warplanes.

Britain is scrapping its 5G deal with a PRC-backed firm, offering 3 million Hongkongers a pathway to British citizenship and sending its new aircraft carrier to the Pacific for its maiden voyage.

France has outlined plans to strengthen military capabilities in the Indo-Pacific. The Philippines reversed plans to terminate a military-training agreement with the United States. Vietnam is opening its ports to U.S. aircraft carriers. All 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members recently rebuked Beijing for lawlessness in the South China Sea.

Deft diplomacy is needed to build this disparate group into a bulwark against China, for we know that allies will be key to waging Cold War 2.0, as they were during the long, twilight struggle with Moscow.

UNITED Turning back stateside, hopefully Americans are united by more than what we oppose. Hopefully there are values that unite most of us and reflect a sense of patriotism.

Neighborliness is patriotic and something we can agree on, even in a time of philosophical division. More than 62 percent of Americans routinely help their neighbors. Public-health patriots and individual-liberty patriots alike have offered a helping hand during the COVID-19 crisis, reminding us that America remains a nation of individuals, houses of worship and charities that rise to the occasion. We will need to sustain our sense of neighborliness to navigate a world scarred by COVID-19.

NORTH AMERICA'S

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TOO MANY AMERICANS ARE UNAWARE OF AMERICA'S STORY. THIS IS WHERE AMERICAN LEGION POSTS, CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, LABOR-UNION LOCALS, PUBLIC-HEALTH PATRIOTS AND INDIVIDUAL-LIBERTY PATRIOTS CAN HELP.

Respect for religion is patriotic and something we can agree on, even in a time of philosophical division. Eighty-seven percent of Americans believe in God. That's astonishing for a country as diverse as ours. Yet given the central role faith has played in America's development, this shouldn't be surprising. America is a country where presidents lead prayer breakfasts, legislative business opens with prayer, the chief magistrates begin hearings with the refrain "God save the United States and this honorable court."

Importantly, it is not a single faith that unites America, but rather respect for faith. This respect for faith – a humbling reminder that there's something more powerful than the individual, the public or the government – helps support our political system. We don't have to worship on the same days or in the same ways to recognize this truth. As Alexis de Tocqueville observed, "I do not know whether all Americans have a sincere faith in religion ... but I am certain that they hold it to be indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions."

A belief in American exceptionalism is patriotic and something we can agree on, even in a time of philosophical division. Eighty-five percent of Americans believe America "stands above all other countries" or is "one of the greatest countries," according to Pew. Yet growing numbers of young Americans don't grasp how unique America is, how much America has done for the world, how fortunate we are to live here.

The stuff we take for granted – political freedom, economic opportunity, the rule of law, the right to peacefully assemble, freedom of movement and speech, the right to believe in any god or no god at all – is rare. Only 43 percent of countries are considered free; only 4 percent of humanity lives in America.

Countless millions journey here from other lands to taste freedom – to be part of a nation where a refugee from Czechoslovakia could be entrusted to oversee foreign policy, a Taiwanese immigrant could serve in the president's cabinet, a child born into Soviet scarcity could grow up to build a doorway to the Internet's limitless possibilities (Google), the son of a Turkish diplomat (Coca-Cola)

or a Syrian refugee (Apple) or a Cuban immigrant (Amazon) could lead or launch the world's most ubiquitous companies, a child could escape the Nazis and the Red Army and grow to command the armed forces of his adopted home. Only in America.

Of course, there's another reason the United States is exceptional. Millions of Americans – of every race and ethnic background – journey to other lands to defend freedom. Americans saved Europe from itself in 1917, rescued the world from a dark age a generation later, rebuilt what Hitler and Tojo destroyed, defended the frontiers of freedom from Stalin and his heirs, and today serve as civilization's first-responder and last line of defense. They are saving Somalis from famine, Yazidis from the Islamic State, Liberians from Ebola; liberating Afghans and Iragis from terrorist tyrannies; and protecting Kuwaitis and Kurds, Kosovars and Koreans. It's no wonder why the people of Hong Kong are waving U.S. flags and singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" as they rally against Beijing.

American firms Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Inovio, and Pfizer are leading the race to produce a COVID-19 vaccine for the world. And America has poured more into global COVID-19 relief than any other country – 12 times more than China.

All this reminds us why Jefferson saw America as "a barrier against ... barbarism," why Lincoln described America as "the last best hope of earth," why King believed God "called America to do a special job for mankind," why Reagan viewed America as "a shining city upon a hill."

Too many Americans are unaware of America's story. This is where American Legion posts, chambers of commerce, labor-union locals, publichealth patriots and individual-liberty patriots can help. Partnering with educators, we can share America's story, explain why we sometimes must sacrifice for the public good and sometimes must fight for individual liberty, and remind young Americans – and each other – that what unites us is bigger than what separates us.

Alan W. Dowd is a senior fellow with the Sagamore Institute Center for America's Purpose.

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It's a cruel fact of life, as we age, gravity takes over. Our muscles droop, our bodies sag and the weight of the world seems to be planted squarely on our shoulders. We dread taking a fall, so we find ourselves walking less and less- and that only makes matters worse.

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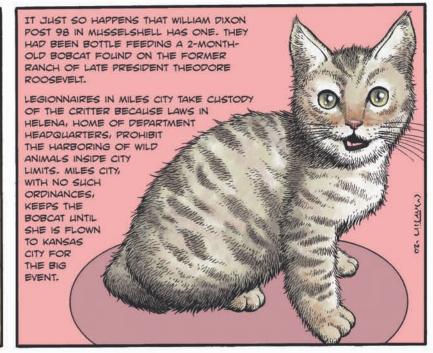
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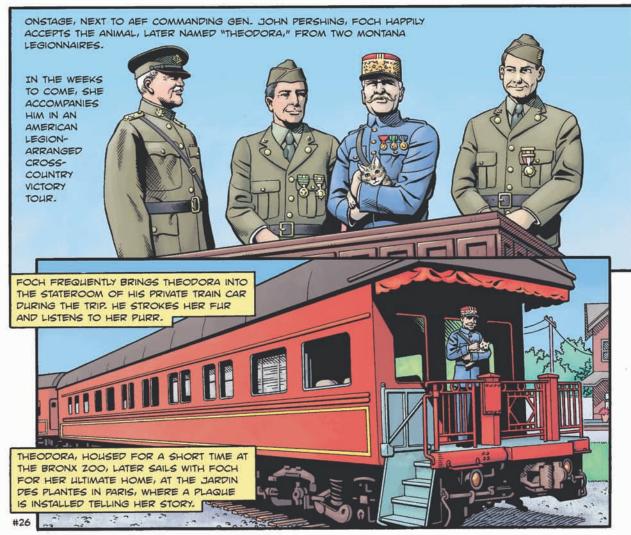
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STORY: JEFF STOFFER GARY MARTIN ART: MARCUS ESKOW

THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MONTANA WANTS TO MAKE THE MOST OF ITS MOMENT AT THE 3RD NATIONAL CONVENTION, IN KANSAS CITY. THE ALLIED GENERALS OF WORLD WAR I - INCLUDING FRENCH MARSHAL FERDINAND FOCH - ARE AMONG MORE THAN 100,000 SCHEDULED TO ATTEND THE 1921 GATHERING.

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VETERANS & CHILDREN

WALK, RUN, RIDE

Thousands of Legion Family members go the distance in commander's challenge.

The American Legion Family has responded to a challenge by National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford by lacing up their sneakers, pushing the pedals and finding other fun ways to cover 100 miles.

The 100 Miles for Hope campaign encourages physical activity during this

time of social distancing, and raises money for the Legion's Veterans & Children Foundation. From Aug. 3 through Veterans Day – 100 days – members of the American Legion Family are racking up the miles by walking, running, cycling, riding motorcycles and more.

More than 2,700 people signed up in the first two weeks. Some are walking. Others are riding bicycles or motorcycles. Others have chosen swimming, canoeing and other creative ways of hitting the century mark.

Supporting the Veterans & Children Foundation is one of the reasons why Army veteran John Piechowski and his friend and cycling partner, Donald Weigend, quickly signed up. Among the first finishers, they cycled 223 miles over four days during the campaign's first week.

"Any time I see an organization helping our fellow veterans, I'm interested in how I can help their cause," says Piechowski, who has been a member of Staff Sgt. Henry F. Gumm Post 486 in Jackson, Wis., for 19 years. "When I read



Oxford is not only walking 100 miles as part of the challenge, but biking it, too.

For a \$30 registration fee, participants receive a moisture-wicking shirt (men's,

women's and children's sizes available) and a sign, as well as a link to download and print a certificate of completion upon finishing. About half the fee goes to the Veterans & Children Foundation, after production and shipping costs.

Angel Faulkner, an Army veteran of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, jumped right in.

"Everyone should do at least 10,000 steps a day anyway," says Faulkner, second vice commander of Brownsburg Lincoln Post 331 in Brownsburg, Ind. "It's good for the heart, helps keep the weight down and helps fight diabetes. And if people are feeling down about the news, this is good for mental wellness."

- Henry Howard

GET STARTED TODAY

There is still time to participate in the 100 Miles for Hope campaign. Learn more at **legion.org/100miles**.

LEGACY

PNC DiFrancesco's perspectives

American Legion Past National Commander Dominic DiFrancesco describes what nearly 70 years of membership and leadership in the nation's largest veterans organization has meant to him in the newest video installment of "PNC Perspectives." DiFrancesco, a Korean War Navy veteran and member of American Legion Post 594 in Middletown, Ohio, led the organization in 1991 and 1992.

🦚 legion.org/legiontv







Music for the troops

Massive campaign aimed to collect 37.5 million old records to make new ones.

Nearly every page of the July 1942 *National Legionnaire* contained the same call to action. In large type on the front page howled the words 37 MILLION RECORDS IS GOAL.

A two-week kickoff campaign from July 17 to Aug. 2, 1942, called on American Legion Family members everywhere to "move into action with a national house-to-house canvass, urging neighbors and friends to scour attics and cellars for old phonograph records. It is estimated that some 200 million discs of this type are stored in American homes."

The initiative was called "Records for Our Fighting Men," and was one element of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Committee on War Relief Agencies; the nonprofit corporation was the idea of such music stars as Gene Autry, Kate Smith, Fritz Reiner, Sigmund Spaeth and Kay Kyser. The concept was to collect old record albums, send them in to be recycled, and use revenue from the scrap material to make new discs for the troops. An American Legion contract with Columbia Recording Co. and RCA Victor stated that the new records would be manufactured at factory cost and sent to deployed U.S. troops and those hospitalized overseas. Phonograph players were also to be sent.

"I can't claim to know everything that goes on in the minds of fellows in uniform," big-band leader Kyser wrote in the *National Legionnaire*. "But I've played a good many camps, and I know they're hungry for music. It's one of the big ties with civilian life."

Only about half the nation's posts and units participated

in the first drive. By the end of September, the number of records collected by Legionnaires and Auxiliary members exceeded 11 million, enough to make some 370,000 new albums for the troops, so the campaign had a second run, which began July 3, 1943, under the headline "Every Old Disc Must be Drafted for War."

The American Legion Department of Pennsylvania led the nation through May 31, 1943, with 411,874 pounds collected.

The 1943 drive had stronger participation, with 43 of the 49 continental U.S. American Legion departments mobilizing teams. Hearst Newspapers threw its editorial might behind the effort. Major department stores, state and city officials became ambassadors of the program.

The Department of Colorado enlisted the help of schoolchildren to haul 17,000 pounds of old records to its receiving station on the first day of the second campaign, which had no defined end date.

By June 1944, the two-year effort was credited with more than 6.9 million pounds of records – enough to make and send more than 500,000 brand-new ones to the troops.

The program was moved fully under American Legion National Headquarters by the end of 1945, when the need shifted to wounded and sick veterans recovering in military and VA hospitals. In 1948, the program was dissolved, all the money raised having been spent on more than 2 million new records delivered to troops overseas, recovering personnel and veterans in hospital care.

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SCHOLARSHIPS

Legacy Run rolls on at 15

Deadline extended for scholarship donations.

The American Legion Legacy Run celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. And while the annual cross-country caravan of motorcycles and three-wheelers that normally leads to the American Legion national convention was derailed due to the pandemic, American Legion Riders across the nation are taking to the road in their local communities to maintain momentum through in-state Legacy Runs and events to support the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund.

The deadline for donations to count toward the 15th Legacy Run campaign has been extended through Dec. 31.

All tax-deductible contributions go directly to the American Legion Legacy Fund, which provides college scholarships for qualified children of U.S. military personnel who lost their lives or became 50 percent or more disabled while on active duty since 9/11. More than \$3.7 million in scholarships have been awarded through May 2020.

A variety of commemorative gifts will be presented to donors, based on their investments to the fund, including:

- \$15 A signed thank-you card from American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford and National American Legion Riders Chairman Mark Clark.
- \$25 A 15th Anniversary commemorative challenge coin.
- \$50 A 15th Anniversary commemorative T-shirt.
- \$75 "For the Cause, Not the Applause," a 44-page illustrated history of the Legacy Run, with photos and special moments, along with voices of students whose lives were made better by the American Legion Legacy Scholarship, plus the main patch for the 15th Legacy Run and a "Quarantined 2020: Riding in Spirit" patch.
- \$250 All of the above-listed commemorative items.
 Additional gifts are available for donations of \$500 or more.

To learn more and give to the 2020 Legacy Run's scholarship effort, visit **legion.org/riders/legacyrun/donation** or mail a donation to The American Legion Legacy Run, Attn: Internal Affairs & Membership Division, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Please include your shirt size.





ACTIVE DUTY

America's Soviet ship

As a rule, Navy ships are built in American shipyards – with one notable exception, defense writer H.I. Hutton notes in a recent issue of *Forbes*.

USNS Lance Cpl. Roy M. Wheat – a 15,804-ton vessel – was built during the Cold War in the Soviet Union. It launched in 1989 as *Vladimir Vaslyaev* and was operated by the Black Sea Shipping Company.

The Navy acquired the ship about a decade later on the commercial market. After a refit, it joined the Military Sealift Command in 2003. The ship was renamed for Wheat, who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for service in Vietnam, where he threw himself on a mine to save two fellow Marines.

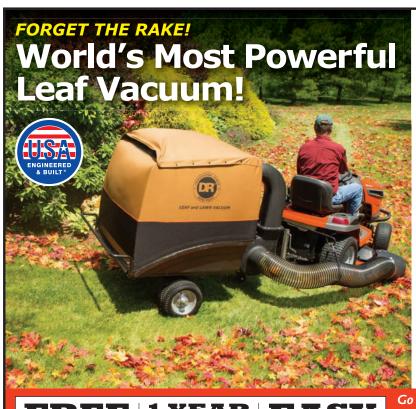
ACTIVE DUTY

This is no longer a research effort or a demonstration effort. It is a strategic combat capability, and we are on the right path to get it in soldiers' hands.

Lt. Gen. L. Neil Thurgood, director for Hypersonics, Directed Energy, Space and Rapid Acquisition in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, on the service's plan for a combat-capable laser weapon system. DoD expects to stand up a battalion of Stryker vehicles outfitted with high-powered laser weapons in 2021, with three more in 2023. Source. Task & Purpose



Soldiers from 2-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team stage their vehicles at Fort Irwin, Calif. Photoby Army Sqt. Nicole Branch



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MEDIA

Award-winning 'Boys State' documentary chronicles week that shapes a lifetime

Like the program itself, "Boys State" – the award-winning documentary that chronicles the 2018 Texas Boys State session – is largely focused on politics, primarily the boys' gubernatorial race. It's the little moments, though – in the film and the program – where participants shine.

"Some of my favorite things in the film are things I wasn't part of or aware of," said Steven Garza of Houston, one of four "statesmen" featured in the documentary, which premiered on Apple TV+ on Aug. 14. "It's such an amazing experience that's immortalized in this film."

"Boys State" won the U.S. Documentary Competition Grand Jury Prize at this year's Sundance Film Festival, as well as the Louis Black Lone Star Award Special Jury Recognition for Documentary at South by Southwest.

At Texas Boys State, each pair of roommates was assigned to different parties, yet amid heated political campaigns, deep connections were made across party lines.

In one of his favorite moments that didn't make the film's final cut, Garza and the Nationalist party's chairman, René Otero, discuss their political leanings.

Ben Feinstein, who chaired the Federalist party, said the Boys State experience reaffirmed his commitment to American ideals and values. "It was nice to hear people unapologetically advocating for democracy, for liberty and justice for all," he said. "And (The American) Legion was really balanced about it.

"Steven can attest to this. When we were there as counselors, they deliberately made an effort to bring in voices from a lot of different points of view, but the common thread was we're all Americans. Seeing a program that's so unapologetically for that but still willing to listen to different sides and acknowledging that being an American isn't the most straightforward thing – that's great."

- Andy Proffet

BY THE NUMBERS

Penny wise

60 Percent of coins produced by the U.S. Mint that are pennies

7 billion+ Pennies produced by the Mint in a typical year

2 cents Cost of producing a penny

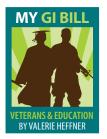
2 seconds Time it takes a typical U.S. worker to earn a penny

\$72 million+ Money the Mint lost making pennies in 2019

Source: NP

EDUCATION

'Hybrid' classes and COVID-19



Q: I plan to attend the University of Michigan using my Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. When I registered for classes, I was told they would be in the classroom. However, due to COVID-19, I'll meet with instructors only on the first day, and the remaining classes are online. Will I still receive my Basic Housing Allowance (BHA)?

A: According to VA, courses with combined classroom instruction and distance learning are considered resident classes. Even when students meet only once for a course, VA regards it as classroom instruction. When courses that should

have been taught in person move online only due to COVID-19, students must contact their school certifying officials to ensure their certification is accurate.

Valerie Heffner is a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Apache Junction, Ariz. askvalerie@legion.org



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Doctors Are Tired of Watching Their Patients
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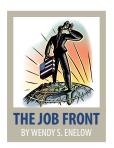






CAREERS

How to navigate a multigenerational workforce



Today's workforce comprises four distinct groups: Generation Z (18 to 24), millennials (25 to 34), Generation X (35 to 54) and baby boomers (55 and older). The age range and unique characteristics of each group make it critical to understand what motivates each group, how they work, and what we can do to thrive in an environment

with vastly different viewpoints and expectations.

- Generation Z workers are largely focused on money in addition to flexibility, challenging work and a strong brand that distinguishes them in their workplaces. This group learned valuable economic lessons watching their parents struggle during the Great Recession of 2007-2009. Other key motivators are skill development and careeradvancement opportunities. As of this generation, college-educated women now outnumber college-educated men in the workforce.
- Millennials define three things as most critical to their success: higher pay, flexibility and challenging work. In fact, flexibility ranks No. 1 for millennial women, who often have to balance their careers with family. This generation prefers group interactions and values teamwork. Conversely, millennial men appreciate positive relationships with co-workers and having a good boss who values them and acknowledges their talents.
- Generation X workers are often driven by the unusual personal demands on them; many are caring for their children while simultaneously caring for aging parents. As a result, flexibility in the workplace is their No. 1 consideration. They want to choose when to start and end their workday to accommodate their responsibilities, and access to paid parental leave as necessary. They also want the option to work remotely, a perk COVID-19 has brought to the forefront for a huge percentage of the U.S. workforce.
- Baby boomers are often characterized as solely focused on their careers and a good paycheck. But as they age, new priorities emerge. They begin to place a higher degree of importance on relationships with company leadership and co-workers, just as they do on positive interactions with friends and family. Most are less interested in developing new professional skills and would rather grow as individuals. Their focus has shifted from a work-only mindset to one that acknowledges the importance of relationships in all areas of their lives.

Wendy Enelow is a master résumé writer and author of "Expert Résumé & LinkedIn Profiles for Managers & Executives" and other titles. **wendy@wendyenelow.com**



MEDIA

Legion podcast quickly grows audience

Just four months after its launch, The American Legion's Tango Alpha Lima podcast quadrupled the number of monthly downloads.

"This surge in growth is a testament to the value of electronic media in today's world," says Walter Ivie, chairman of The American Legion's Media & Communications Commission. "While there is – and will always be – a place for print media, we need to use all our digital media to engage with members, potential members and other patriotic Americans who support our military and veterans."

Each week, a new episode features co-hosts and post-9/11 veterans Mark Seavey, Jeff Daly and Ashley Gorbulja-Maldonado. Generally, one week's episode centers on a discussion about hot topics in the veterans community; the next features an interview with a special guest.

For example, in July, amid the debate over race, Legionnaires and former law enforcement officers Autrey James, Hugh Crooks and Sean Powers shared their unique experiences in a special two-part episode.

It was well-received by listeners, including sebersole 276, who commented on YouTube: "As a Vietnam veteran, I served on a ship that was still reverberating (from) the race riot that happened shortly before I went aboard (the Detroit Riot of 1967). I am proud to be in the Legion family, where this discussion can take place. I am extremely proud of how this discussion has taken the politics out of it and replaced it with common concerns and common-sense attitudes."

All episodes in both audio and video formats, bios of the co-hosts and more are online at **legion.org/ tangoalphalima**. Rate and review the podcast on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher or other platform-hosting sites. That helps others with an interest in military topics, veterans issues and patriotism find Tango Alpha Lima.

– Henry Howard

BY THE NUMBERS

Falling bomber barometer

2,334 Bombers in the U.S. arsenal in 1957

411 Bombers in the U.S. arsenal in 1990

157 Bombers in the U.S. arsenal in 2020

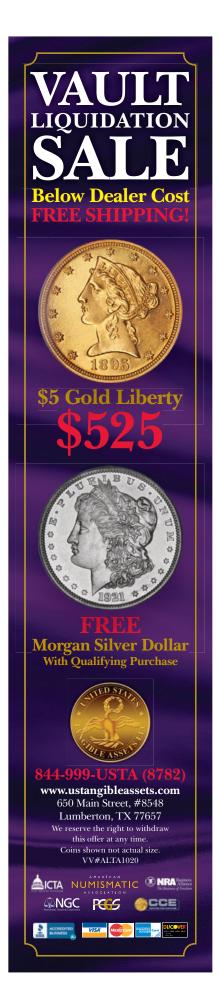
140 Planned number of bombers in the U.S. arsenal in 2021

Sources: Retired Air Force Gen. Dave Deptula, Forbes





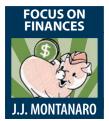




PERSONAL FINANCE



What to know before tapping your nest egg



Earlier this year, the CARES Act became law. Intended to help Americans get through this difficult time, Uncle Sam's response to the pandemic contains provisions that temporarily make it easier for people to access their retirement funds.

This access comes in the form of increased borrowing limits from your employer plan, or penalty-free withdrawals from an employer plan or an IRA. Because these special loan provisions expired Sept. 23, I'll focus on

the coronavirus withdrawals allowed by the CARES Act.

If you've already taken advantage of the change or are considering a withdrawal, here are some points to understand:

- The eligibility rules are broad. You can make a coronavirus-related distribution or withdrawal if you or a family member have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or if you've suffered adverse financial consequences because of the disease. The latter includes reduced work hours and not being able to work because you didn't have child care.
- It's temporary. As I write this, coronavirus-related distributions are available through the 2020 calendar year.
- Employers make the call. Your employer is not mandated to allow these coronavirus withdrawals, so check with your plan to see if it is a possibility.
- It's capped. You don't have unlimited access to your retirement accounts. All coronavirus withdrawals are limited to a total of \$100,000. For example, if you have both an IRA and a 401(k), your total withdrawal is capped at \$100,000. Withdrawals above that threshold won't be eligible for the beneficial treatment discussed here.
- It removes key barriers. Typically, a pre-59½ withdrawal from a retirement account would trigger a 10 percent penalty. Likewise, a withdrawal from an employer plan would require a 20 percent mandatory federal income tax withholding. Those penalties and withholdings do not apply with coronavirus withdrawals.
- There are special tax provisions. In addition to waiving the 10 percent early withdrawal penalty, you can elect to have the taxable portion yes, this part of the withdrawal will be taxed as ordinary income spread out over three years. A sit-down with your tax adviser can help you map out the best plan based on your situation. Remember, these withdrawals are not tax-free.
- It can be paid back. You can pay back the withdrawal by making a rollover contribution to your retirement account or IRA. Rules vary by employer, so it could be possible that when replacing money withdrawn from your 401(k), you would have to roll the money into an IRA. Further, the replacement does not have to happen as a lump sum. You would recoup the taxes paid on the withdrawal by filing an amended tax return.
- There's an opportunity cost. Clearly, removing money saved for retirement should not be done lightly. Let's say you pulled \$100,000 out of your 401(k) to help cover lost income or other pandemic-related needs. With 15 years and 7 percent growth until retirement, you will have shrunk your nest egg by around \$276,000.

In the end, the call is yours, but it's a call with serious near- and long-term implications.

J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner with USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for him online.

legion.org/usaa/focusonfinances

The Invention of the Year

The world's lightest and most portable mobility device



Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people. Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation... The Zinger.

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough... a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

"I can now go places and do things that I wasn't able to go or do before. It has given me a new lease on life and I am so happy I found it!" -Dana S., Texas

The first thing you'll notice about the **Zinger** is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum. It weighs only 47.2 lbs but can handle a passenger that's up to 275 lbs! It features one-touch

folding and unfolding—when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the **Zinger** to move forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.

Why take our word for it. You can try the **Zinger** out for yourself with our exclusive home trial. Call now, and find out how you can try out a **Zinger** of your very own.

Zinger Chair®

Call now and receive a utility basket absolutely FREE with your order.

Please mention code 113704 when ordering.



How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our website, www.legion.org/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.

Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim. Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life memberships by their posts. This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership. Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to *The American Legion Magazine*, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing,

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to *The American Legion Magazine*, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

ARMY

4th Inf Rgt, Columbus, GA, 10/7-11, Richard Wideman, mrwideman12@gmail.com; 8th Armd Div Assn, Herndon, VA, 5/14-16, Anthony Waskie, (215) 423-3930, awaski01@gmail.com 87th Eng Bn, Branson, MO, 10/7-11, Stephanie Lindner, (417) 338-4048, stephanie@gatheringsplus.com

NAVY

Carter Hall LSD 3, Catamount LSD 17 & Oak Hill LSD 7, Oklahoma City, 5/13-16, Raylah Holm, (509) 607-9021, raylah@aol.com; Wahoo SS 565, Pensacola, FL, 4/28-5/1, Steve Ploeckelmann, (651) 429-6354, ploecks@gmail.com

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Post 29, AK: Charles M. Boring, Kerry R. Hennings Post 255, CA: Jeronimo Arciga, James M. Cupit, Max Montez, Ralph O'Campo, Alfred E. Roys Post 20, CT: Joseph Bandish, Ronald A. Chase, Gerald E. Doty, Arthur S. Johnson Post 328, NJ: David Broadwell

IN SEARCH OF

1st Bn 4th Mar 3rd Mar Div S-4 (1967-1968, Vietnam), James Franchetti, (925) 323-2118, liamesfranchetti@gmail.com

2nd AF SAC SARPF (Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam, 1966), John Lenhardt, (618) 419-1010, vfwjal@ hotmail.com

3rd Plt 501st MP Co (Bamberg, Germany, 1990-1993), Christopher Reed, (407) 412-1443 28th BPO APO 757 (Frankfurt, Germany, 1955-1957), Dick Lishman, (603) 926-3723

361st MP Co (Fort Shafter, Honolulu, 1952-1954), Fred Eskuri, (239) 822-7565, fastfred201@ vahoo.com

374th ASA Co (Fort Carson, CO, 1975-1977), Joe Fraioli, (215) 287-5837, joefraioli8@aol.com

392nd AF Hosp (Cooke & Vandenburg AFBs, June 1958-June 1960), Calvin Perry, (978) 475-5924, cgeeco@verizon.net

Army Field Stn Augsburg, Germany, Support Bn & 1st Opns Bn (1977-1981), Joe Fraioli, (215) 287-5837, joefraioli8@aol.com

C-130A Blind Bat Units – 21st, 35th, 41st & 817th TCS (Ubon RTAFB, Thailand, 1966-1969), Richard Ries, (303) 532-9775, usnavy_n3n@yahoo.com

Co 270 (Great Lakes NTC, IL, May-June 1968), Steve "Smitty" Smith, (908) 295-3785, smiyyt20259@msn.com

Middlesex County LST 983 (Little Creek, VA, 1968-1969), Steve "Smitty" Smith, (908) 295-3785, smiyyt20259@msn.com

Plt 1035 1st RT Bn RTR (MCRD San Diego), David Yocom, weekdayviews@gmail.com

St. Clair County LST 1096 (Dec 1960-May 1963), Abner Vickrey, (785) 212-9258, aandbvick@ gmail.com

Svc Co 20th FA Bn 4th Inf Div (Hanau, Germany, 1955-1956), Walter Deane, (540) 454-2273

Trans Co 7th Inf (Fort Hunter Liggett, CA, 1976-1979), Debra Karic, (862) 571-4686, debrakatic@yahoo.com

TAPS

Billy W. Bell, Dept. of South Carolina. Dept. Cmdr. 1991-1992, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 2001-2007, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 2007-2011, Nat'l Health Admin. Cmte. Memb. 2013-2017, Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1992-1999, Nat'l Veterans Affairs & Rehab. Cmsn. Memb. 2005-2007, Nat'l Veterans Affairs & Rehab. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 2007-2011 and Nat'l Veterans Affairs & Rehab. Cmsn. Region 3 Memb. 2001-2005.

Mark A. Main, Dept. of Maryland. Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2007-2013 and Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Memb 2013-2020.

Raymond J. Nydegger, Dept. of Montana. Dept. Cmdr. 1975-1976.

Louis A. "Tony" Santillanes Sr., Dept. of New Mexico. Nat'l Vice Cmdr. 1992-1993, Dept. Cmdr. 1972-1973, Nat'l Children & Youth Cmsn. Region 7 Memb. 1978-1980, Nat'l Children & Youth Cmsn. Region 7 Chmn. 1980-1981, Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1974-1977 and 2000-2003, Nat'l Veterans Employment & Education Cmsn. Memb. 1981-1992, Nat'l Merchant Marine Cmte. Consultant 1977-1978 and Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1967-1968.

Edward J. Voisard, Dept. of Ohio. Dept. Cmdr. 1990-1991, Nat'l Aerospace Cmte. Memb. 1998-2010, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1983-1988 and 1996-1998, and Nat'l Memb. & Post Activ. Cmte. Consultant 1991-1996.

CANCELED REUNIONS

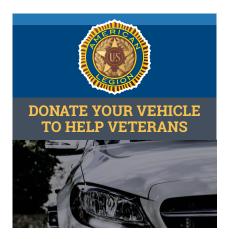
If your military reunion has been canceled, let us know by sending an email to reunions@legion.org. For a list of canceled reunions, go to legion.org/reunions/canceled.

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THE SCOUTMASTER asked, "How could you get lost? Didn't you have your compass?" "Yes," the Scout replied, "but it kept pointing north when I wanted to go south!"

WHAT DID the pirate say when he turned 80? "Aye matey!"

PROGRESS is made by lazy people who are looking for an easier way to do things.

A WOMAN was taking care of a neighbor's little girl one morning. She arrived in time for breakfast and sat down at the table.

"Mommy always makes me hot muffins for breakfast," the girl said. Eager to please, the woman went into the kitchen and prepared a tin of hot, fresh muffins.

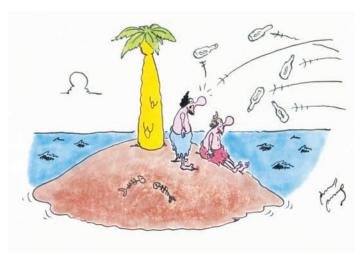
"No, thank you," the girl said when they were brought to her. The surprised woman replied, "I thought you said your mother always has muffins for breakfast."

"She does, but I don't eat them."

WHEN A JOB APPLICATION asks who is to be notified in case of emergency, I always write, "A very good doctor."

WHEN TEMPTED to fight fire with fire, remember that the fire department usually uses water.

WHICH ARM is the Statue of Liberty holding over her head? The one with the torch.



"These are the comments from my last message."



"Got any more? I'm carb loading before I fly south."



WHY DOES a slight tax increase cost you \$200 and a substantial tax cut save you 30 cents?

TO THE PESSIMIST, the glass is half empty. To the optimist, the glass is half full. To the engineer, the glass is twice as big as it needs to be.

A POLICE DETECTIVE presented himself at the door of a music academy. "Excuse me," he said, "but I hope you can cooperate and give me any information you have."

"On what?" the receptionist asked, puzzled.

"We got a tip from the house next door that somebody was murdering a Mr. Bach, and the chief sent me down here to work on the case."

"THE SECOND DAY of a diet is always easier than the first. By the second day, you're off it."

- Buddy Hackett



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The Jitterbug® Flip, from the makers of the original easy-to-use cell phone, has big buttons and an exclusive 5Star® Urgent Response button on the keypad.

EASY TO USE Today, cell phones are hard to hear, difficult to dial and overloaded with features you may never use. That's not the case with the Jitterbug Flip. A large screen and big buttons make it easy to call family and friends. The powerful speaker ensures every conversation will be loud and clear. Plus, straightforward YES and NO buttons make navigating the menu simple.



EASY TO ENJOY Wherever you go, a built-in camera makes it easy and fun for you to capture and share your favorite memories. And a built-in reading magnifier with LED flashlight helps you see in dimly lit areas. With all the features you need, the Jitterbug Flip also comes with a long-lasting battery, so you won't have to worry about running out of power.

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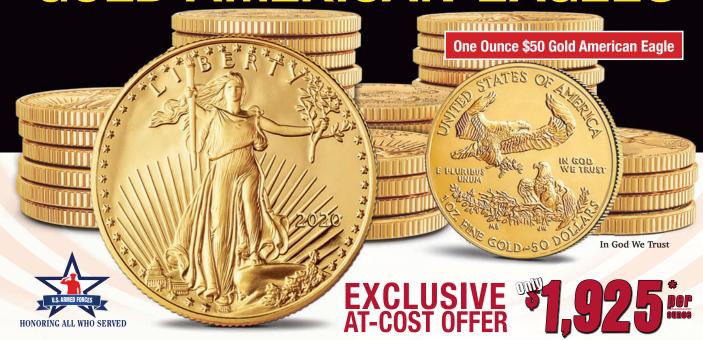
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